

JEFFERSON COUNTY CEMP
Annex 5
Emergency Public Information

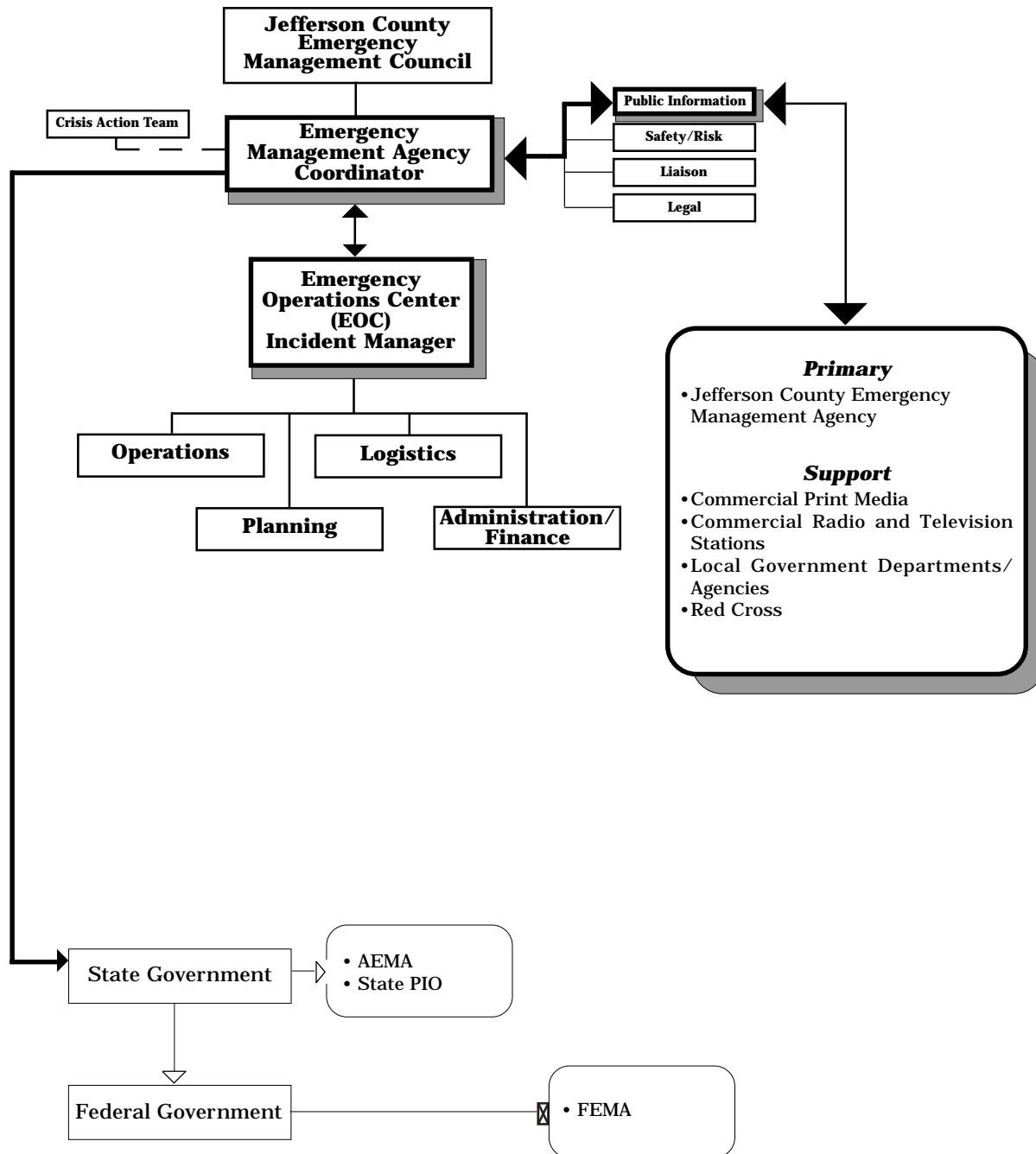
Preface

Rapid dissemination of information is essential and vital for health and safety protection during and after emergencies and disasters. The primary means to do this is by direct contact with the media and by use of the Emergency Alert System (EAS). The EAS will be used to provide emergency information and instructions to citizens. In the Jefferson County area, nearly all radio and television stations participate in the EAS and will simulcast emergency announcements.

Primary

Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency

Annex 5 : Emergency Public Information



This diagram illustrates the concept of operations for this function, particularly how departments/agencies/organizations are to be coordinated. The diagram assumes a full EOC activation. The EOC position(s) responsible for the coordination of this function is indicated. Likely primary and support resource providers are listed.

Jefferson County, Alabama
Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

ANNEX 5**EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION****I. PURPOSE.**

To establish policies and procedures for disseminating official information and instructions to local government officials and to the citizens of Jefferson County through all available communications media before, during and after an emergency or disaster.

II. POLICY.

It is the policy of the Jefferson County Emergency Management Council that:

- A. Jefferson County EMA, in a cooperative effort with the media, will endeavor to release timely and accurate emergency information to the public concerning emergency preparedness, response and recovery. This should be coordinated with neighboring jurisdictions and the Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) as much as possible.
- B. Each local government may release information concerning their respective emergency actions. This information should be coordinated with the Crisis Action Team (CAT)/ Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in a timely manner. Any releases prepared by local government which quote or mention the EMA or EOC shall be coordinated with the EMA before being released.
- C. Local government employees are encouraged to utilize portable battery powered, commercially available radios for emergencies since critical employee emergency instructions/information will be broadcast over the Emergency Alert System (EAS).
- D. This annex may be utilized singularly, or in conjunction with a Crisis Action Team (CAT) or full Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activation.

III. DEPARTMENTS/AGENCIES/ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES.

In the fullest context, these responsibilities assume a full Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activation. In the interest of time and efficiency, the departments / agencies / organizations involved with this function may or may not be utilized in smaller Crisis Action Team (CAT) situations. Note: During a CAT situation, the Jefferson County EMA and / or other CAT members in the interest of saving lives and property, will liaison direct to the agencies with resources and capabilities. As the situation grows larger and more complex, your agency may be called upon to perform some or all its stated responsibilities.

A. Local Government.

Local governments are encouraged to develop their own procedures to guide their initial

response to emergency events occurring within their jurisdiction. They should consider the following responsibilities in their emergency planning efforts. Responsibilities that a local government cannot fulfill can be deferred to the Jefferson County CEMP.

- Jefferson County EMA is the lead agency responsible for organization and mobilization of this function during emergencies. Each local government should identify a point of contact for implementation.
- Conduct hazard awareness programs.
- Coordinate with media.
- Develop public education programs.
- Prepare emergency information for release during emergencies.
- Release public information.
- Establish a means to monitor and respond to rumors.
- Schedule news conferences.
- Appoint a Public Information Officer (PIO).
- Designate an information center that will be the single, official point of contact for the media during an emergency.
- Designate a facility where media representatives can be briefed, compose their news copy, and have telecommunications with their newspaper or station.
- List and maintain available media resources (call letters, names, addresses, and telephone numbers) that will disseminate emergency information to the public.

B. Jefferson County Emergency Organization.

If local government capabilities are exceeded, support may be available upon request through the Jefferson County EMA from the following departments/agencies/organizations that comprise the emergency organization for this function:

Primary:

1. Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency.

- Appoint a Public Information Officer.
- Develop and maintain a public information and education program to include hazard awareness programs.
- Coordinate and maintain a working relationship with the media; particularly those who will disseminate emergency information to the public.
- During emergencies: Provide official public information; monitor and respond to rumors; schedule news conferences; designate an information center where media representatives can be briefed, compose their news copy, and have telecommunications with their newspaper or station.
- Ensure all information is cleared with the Emergency Council Chairperson before it is released to the media.

Support:

2. Commercial Print Media.

- Assist with emergency information dissemination.

3. Commercial Radio and Television Stations.

- Assist with emergency information dissemination.
4. Local Government Departments/Agencies.
 - Provide periodic tests of the emergency alert system.
 - Provide public information officers as requested by EMA.
 5. Red Cross.
 - Assist with emergency information dissemination.

C. State Responsibilities.

1. If local capabilities are exceeded, and a local emergency has been declared, state government agencies can augment assistance to local government to meet the emergency needs of victims during declared emergencies/disasters. Requests for state assistance are processed through the Jefferson County EMA.
2. The Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) receives and coordinates requests for state assistance. The Governor may declare a "state of emergency" to authorize use of state resources. Additionally, AEMA will:
 - Coordinate the use of state resources.

D. Federal Responsibilities.

1. Federal government agencies can provide supplemental assistance to local and state government to meet the emergency needs of victims during declared emergencies/disasters. Requests for federal assistance are processed through the Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA).
2. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) receives and coordinates requests for federal assistance. The President may declare an "emergency" or "disaster" to authorize use of federal resources.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS.

A. General.

1. Emergency Public Information (EPI) efforts will focus on specific event-related information. This information will generally be of an instructional nature focusing on such things as warning, evacuation, and shelter. It is also important to keep the public informed of the general progress of events. A special effort will be made to report positive information regarding emergency response to reassure the community that the situation is under control. Rumor control will be a major aspect of the informational program. Along with this will be the use of public feedback as a measure of the programs effectiveness. Education efforts will be directed toward increasing public awareness about potential hazards and how people can deal with them. All information and education efforts will rely heavily on the cooperation of commercial media organizations.

2. The EMA Coordinator is responsible for all education and information programs conducted by Jefferson County EMA. He/she will appoint a Public Information Officer (PIO) to direct all emergency information activities and to be the official point of contact for the media during an emergency. Public information officers from other departments/agencies may be called upon to assist and staff the public information center.

B. Emergency Operations: Emergency Public Information.

1. During emergency operations, the PIO reports or provides a representative to the EOC and/or CAT. As a member of the EOC Management Section, the PIO works closely with the EMA Coordinator, EOC Incident Manager, EOC staff, and public information officers from all concerned agencies and private businesses to collect accurate information. The PIO will brief EOC management and staff on procedures and how to release public information.
2. If media interest is intense, and as directed by the EMA Coordinator, the PIO will establish and staff the Public Information Center (PIC). The PIO/PIC will:
 - a. Be tailored to fit the situation to include media status boards and maps, and a press briefing area.
 - b. Collect and disseminate emergency information in a timely manner.
 - c. Issue official emergency instructions and information to the public through all available means.
 - d. Prepare press releases and develop measures which allow the media to verify sources of information before publication or broadcast.
 - e. Coordinate with media and attempt to gain as much additional intelligence about damage, casualties and general conditions as media can provide. The media may have communication links, both within and outside the county that may be useful in the disaster response.
 - f. Establish a non-emergency information/visitor control section to receive and handle non-emergency calls, arrange for and accompany all visitors to the EOC, and provide escorts to accompany visitors into disaster areas.
 - g. Establish an administrative support section to ensure that the media center is operational and provide language translators as necessary.
3. The primary means to disseminate public information is by direct contact with the media and by use of the EAS. (See EAS Plan, Special Subjects, Section 6.)
 - a. Prior to release of EAS messages, the messages should be coordinated with other local governments involved in the local EAS plan, and with AEMA, whenever possible.
 - b. EAS information should also be disseminated to field forces so they know what information and guidance is being released to the public.

C. Joint Information Center (JIC).

1. In the event of a major disaster/emergency with intense media interest, a Joint Information Center (JIC) may be established locally by the FEMA, AEMA and the county. The JIC:

- Provides a central location for the news media to obtain information to eliminate conflicting reports and to reduce rumors.
- Allows spokespersons from federal, state, county, and municipal representatives to jointly develop and issue news releases.
- Collects and disseminates information to the public to include rumor control information.

2. Facilities.

Equipped with communications equipment and necessary supplies, JICs normally contain a room for media briefings, a media work area, a public information work area, and other rooms for inquiry functions.

3. A "Rumor Control Unit," operating from a room separate from but adjacent to the media briefing room, deals with questions from the public and calmly disperses accurate information to callers.

D. Jefferson County EMA maintains a supply of emergency public information materials concerning a variety of hazards which are available upon request. EMA, in coordination with the PIO, may also develop hazard information specific to the county for distribution to the public.

E. Jefferson County Department of Health may disseminate "Air Warning" declarations in accordance with their procedures as part of this Emergency Public Information function.

V. APPENDICES and/or REFERENCES.

A. Appendices:

None.

B. References:

1. Joint Information Center Procedures (published separately).
2. FEMA Information and Planning Section SOP, July 1996 (published separately).
3. Emergency Alert System Plan (included in the Special Subjects, Section 6).

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